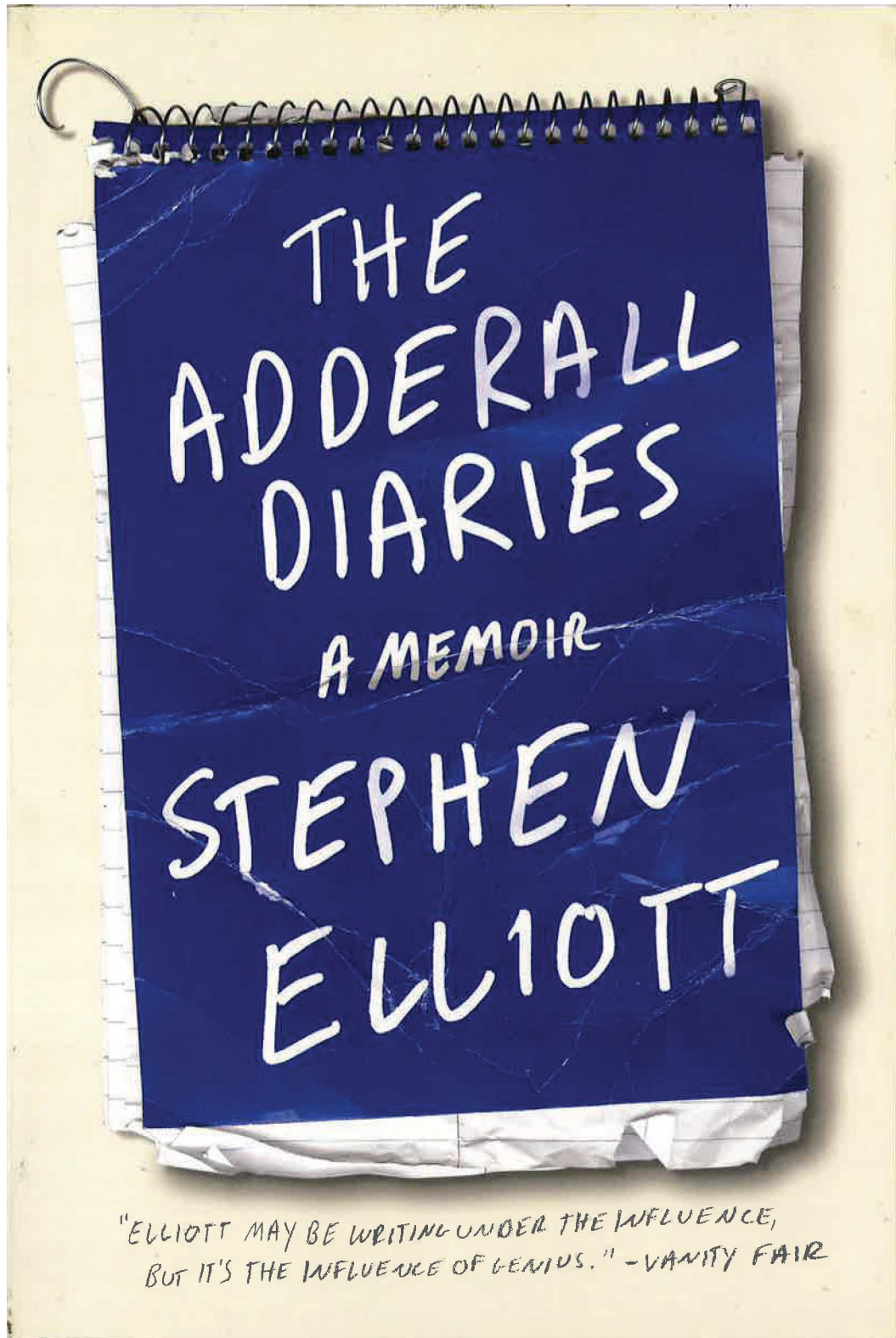


EXHIBIT B



THE ADDERALL DIARIES

A Memoir

Stephen Elliott

Graywolf Press

Copyright © 2009 by Stephen Elliott

Photo/Illustration Credits

Chapter 1: View from Window, by Justin St. Germain. Chapter 3: Vietnamese Girl Fleeing in Terror after a Napalm Attack, by Nick Ut. Still from Hans and Nina's Wedding Video. Chapter 7: Paul Hora in Court, by Vicki Behringer. Beverly Palmer, by Norman Quebedeau. Chapter 9: Ramone Reiser, by Norman Quebedeau. Prosecution Puzzles, by District Attorney Paul Hora. Still from Hans and Nina's Wedding Video. All other photos by the author or Anonymous.

This publication is made possible by funding provided in part by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature, a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and private funders. Significant support has also been provided by Target; the McKnight Foundation; and other generous contributions from foundations, corporations, and individuals. To these organizations and individuals we offer our heartfelt thanks.



Published by Graywolf Press
250 Third Avenue North, Suite 600
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401

All rights reserved.

www.graywolfpress.org

Published in the United States of America

Cloth ISBN: 978-1-55597-538-8

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-55597-570-8

2 4 6 8 9 7 5 3 1

Library of Congress Control Number: 2010922922

Cover design: Rodrigo Corral

CHAPTER 8

*December/January/February; Sluts, Media Whores,
Murderers; Juno; Elizabeth Wurtzel; Proposition 21;
Eurasian Goddess; Adolescent Forgiveness; Winter
Holidays; Suicide Note or Press Release; Sylvia Plath;
Simone Weil; Issues with Women*

From the fifth floor of the courthouse I can see the birds gilding the cold surface of Lake Merrit, hiding in the trees on the lawn at the water's edge. The docks are empty, a steady stream of traffic moves like animation on the freeway nearby, the sun paints the west face of a white tenement on the farther shore.

I never meant to write about a murder. It was just a chance comment when I was grasping for anything. "Your guy just confessed to eight murders." I believed it. I wanted it to be true.

In the opening months of the trial my depression lifts. I can see it, like a cloud cresting a mountain range, but I try to pretend it's not there. I read an essay on William Styron by his daughter, now a novelist herself.¹⁴ He had already written *Darkness Visible*, about his first bout of depression that led to eventual hospitalization. It's a profound work on the subject, eighty pages of

14. *New Yorker*, December 10, 2007.

straightforward prose, as specific and purposeful as a life vest. It became a number one best seller. Following the publication he toured as an advocate and spokesman for the afflicted, but he never wrote the sequel. His daughter tells of when his depression returned. The second time nothing worked. He was in and out of institutions for fifteen years, incoherent with pills and treatment. He stopped trying to write, as if the author of *Sophie's Choice* was entirely separate from the man in bed on the second floor, refusing to move. He met his wife when he was still that young and brilliant writer. He told her to leave him, but she wouldn't, even though he wasn't a particularly good husband. She entered a new phase of life as his caretaker.

The prosecution is still calling witnesses. Hans' neighbor saw Hans two days after Nina disappeared. It was eleven at night and Hans had just brought his mother home. It was two hours after he was told Nina was missing. It was a sweltering night and the neighbor was on his deck barefoot, in shorts and a T-shirt, watering the rose bushes. He saw Hans in jogging pants and a heavy jacket, dressed for winter, hosing down a section of his driveway for half an hour. What's he doing? the neighbor thought. "He was exhibiting strange behavior, even for Hans."

We also hear from Arthur Gomez, who was in jail with Hans after he'd been arrested when a report came on that a body had been found in the Oakland woods. Hans rushed to the TV.

"That's when I knew he did it," Gomez says.

"And why did you decide to testify?" Du Bois asks.

"I've done some bad things. But killing your wife, that's evil."

"I see. And you would say it's evil to kill your wife but not to smack her around?" he asks, referring to Gomez's second felony conviction. Gomez cracks a smile.

"She wasn't my wife."

We also hear from the investigator who found Nina's van

parked near the highway three miles from Hans' mother's house, her groceries strewn about, an exploded melon in the backseat.

In his office Du Bois has articles mentioning this trial framed on his walls, hung before the trial even started, before he knew if he had won or lost.

I remember Sean telling me, "I can see you enjoy the lime-light." He was right. He kept insisting he was the opposite, that he had never looked for attention. But of course he had; he just didn't know it. While he was talking to me he was talking to *20/20*, *48 Hours*, *Wired*. He thinks he knows why he was talking to these people. We all like to think we know why we do what we do. I hear the defense's introduction of Sean as "a drug addict. A *sado-masochist*." Sean said he wouldn't talk to me until after the trial, but at that point he would help with my book. His eight phantom murders hover wraithlike and faceless in the courtroom. Sean won't be testifying. Hora won't call him, and the judge's ruling that Du Bois can't intimate Sean's involvement in the crime renders it pointless for him to call Sean as a witness for the defense.

According to Jung, a stranger can see in an instant something in you that you might spend years learning about yourself. Du Bois harps on the flaws of every witness. How awful we all are when we look at ourselves under a light, finally seeing our reflections. How little we know about ourselves. How much forgiveness it must take to love a person, to choose not to see their flaws, or to see those flaws and love the person anyway. If you never forgive you'll always be alone.

During breaks Du Bois tells us Nina wasn't such a good mother, she was just cultivating an image. He accuses the prosecutor of bringing the case to trial because of the media coverage. But Paul Hora might be the only decent man in the courtroom. Simple and honest, he refers to himself as a Boy Scout, believes deeply in

the law, and goes to sleep early at night. He's one of the best prosecutors in the state. He won't talk to the media. His only fault is a tendency to assume guilt in the accused. A small blemish compared to the rest of us: sluts, media whores, murderers.

Elizabeth Wurtzel just turned forty. She's in law school now. Gorgeous, Ivy League educated, a Generation X darling, she was twenty-four when *Prozac Nation* was released. By her second book she was supplementing antidepressants with Ritalin, chopping her pills and snorting them, which led to her third book, *More, Now, Again*, about her addiction to ADD medication. The book was panned by the critics. *Prozac Nation* offered hope for people with depression; they weren't alone with their bottle of pills. *More, Now, Again* destroyed that premise. It turned out the pills didn't work after all. Like *Prozac Nation*, it also ended on a hopeful note, but people no longer believed it. She had shattered her own myth. I wonder if she's given up writing because it was destroying her, or decided that the return on investment doesn't equal the time served. Perhaps the writing was just a symptom of some other insatiable desire. Maybe she'll write an essay here and there but her life is now about other things.

I wonder if I'll have to quit Adderall soon. I keep upping my dosage with diminishing effects. I'm tense all the time. Sometimes I feel so angry I can't recognize myself. I get headaches. The days fuse together and my memory fails me often. At a birthday party on the weekend, I describe *Juno*, which I had seen earlier, to a friend. I loved the movie. It felt familiar, perhaps because it was written by a former stripper, but more because of the average middle-class existence of the children portrayed in the film. They played records and ran track and called each other on hamburger shaped phones. The parents weren't educated or rich but they were decent. It was a world I knew through a looking glass.

The high school in the film existed within my high school, but I didn't go there. "Who'd you see the movie with?" my friend asks. I stare at her for a minute, unsure if I'll be able to recall. "You don't remember?" And then I do, the memory spreading like an ink stain. I make some joke to cover up. We all forget things. I had just seen the movie three hours earlier.

The online message boards are filled with Adderall and Ritalin junkies, popping up to ninety milligrams every day just to get back to where they were before they started. Like every drug it's never as good as the first time. But the alternative seems so much worse. I don't see how I can write anything without the speed. What would I do if I stopped writing? How would I make money? Who would know I was alive? I lie down at night and cover my eyes, eager for the morning pill. When the Adderall works I lose myself. The amphetamine gives me confidence. I forget that no one depends on me in any way. And then one morning I take the framed picture of a juvenile inmate and lay it on my desk. There's the face of the boy in black and white superimposed on a maximum security cell with its door open to reveal the end of a bed. I'd put together a fundraiser for the child years ago. We packed hundreds of people into an art space and showed a film, then listened to activists and spoken word poets. He had been tried as an adult following the passage of Proposition 21, the Pete Wilson bill. Wilson was the governor of California, a man deformed by the force of his own ambition, and the misnamed *Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act* was supposed to propel him to the presidency. It didn't. He broke the backs of the people he stepped on and then burned out and faded away. As far as I know the boy staring at me is still behind bars and will be for the rest of his life. I used to think that if I had worked harder, been more organized, I could have stopped Proposition 21. I was wrong. Proposition 21 passed with 60 percent of the vote. I place

138 Stephen Elliott

a pill above his face and crush it with the back of a credit card and snort it with a rolled-up check. I notice the difference immediately. It's just like cocaine.

I get a letter from a student in Michigan. He's seventeen and friends with the son of a woman I met years ago in a restaurant near the interstate. Later I would send her money, when I had any. She walked in wearing a full-length fur coat, which I took from her before lighting her cigarette. She had fresh injections in her lips, breast implants, and Botox. She lived fifty miles from anything resembling a city, took uppers all day while selling video chats and phone calls and subscriptions to her Web site, which featured pictures of her fully clothed, shopping for books. She was European and Asian and looked like Jessica Rabbit if Jessica Rabbit starred in *Venus in Furs*. I didn't think I had ever seen anybody so beautiful in my entire life. I wanted to be roped against her body, dragged behind her as she went about her day. She said she was a hypnotist and could read my mind. We drank beers from tall glasses shaped like boots before going to my hotel room where I lay on the floor and she walked across me in her heels. She kept taking pictures of herself, posing for her camera set on the dresser.

"I don't like giving people pleasure," she said. Then she sat on the sofa and I kneeled in front of her and she slapped me several times. She held her cigarette near my face and I could feel its heat about to burn my eyelids. She laughed loudly. Then she pressed the cigarette into the back of both my hands. "Those are going to blister."

The blisters, just behind my thumb and index finger, were the size of pencil erasers. At the time I was finishing my novel *Happy Baby*. Flying home, rubbing the yellow nubs behind my knuckles, I wrote what had just happened into the opening of the book. I think of her every time I look at the scars.

The boy who wrote to me includes a picture of himself hanging out with two friends in a park with their hoods pulled over their ears sharing a large bottle of Jack Daniels. He wants to know what I think of his writing. He's in high school and writes on his Web page about his friend's hot mom and his own drug use. I wonder if he knows what his friend's hot mom does to strangers in hotel rooms. His prose is jittery and honest. He writes about drugs correctly, from the vantage point of a lover who doesn't know he's going to be let down.

There was a time in my life when drugs made me deliriously happy. I remember an apartment near the school where one of Justin's girlfriends lived. Six of us sat on the couch laughing for hours while Pat, in a loose blue polyester shirt, imitated Jesus Christ, spreading his arms for crucifixion, the cuffs hanging loosely from his wrists. "I forgive you," he said. "Seriously. You're forgiven." Anne told us to be quiet, she was worried about the downstairs neighbors, but we could have cared less. We weren't going anywhere.

"Why aren't you high?" I asked. "If you were high we wouldn't be so loud."

I remember drinking vodka from clear plastic bottles the night I turned fourteen, in a basement I'd broken into with Justin and Javier. We drank until dawn and in the morning we were woken by the police and told to get out and not come back. They didn't ask where we were going next. I remember smoking joints dipped in PCP, and I remember playing dice for T-shirts on the top floor of the group home, and I remember waking up one morning with a giant dagger tattooed on my shoulder. I remember climbing from the group home window and hanging from the fire escape, my feet resting on the rail for balance. If I put any weight on the rail the stair would lower and there would be nothing beneath me. It was winter and a fine layer of snow covered the city. I was two stories above the pavement, sneaking

back and forth between rooms, awed as the hospital melted and everything burned bright all the way to the Robert Taylor Homes, the largest housing projects in the world.¹⁵ I remember crawling along the floor searching for a plastic bag the size of a Lemonhead rumored to have disappeared into the carpet. I remember a heavy metal concert on quaaludes and smoking crack from a pressure gauge and feeling for a moment like everything was possible. Drugs didn't make us loveable, they made us capable of love, gave us the ability to forgive, which had eluded us previously. I remember holding a belt in my mouth and pushing the needle into my vein and sliding happily to the floor.

Now I get prescriptions and use drugs for a different reason. I'm more ambitious and I have less control. When Du Bois described Sean as "a drug addict, a *sadomasochist*," he could easily have been describing me.

Court breaks for the winter holidays and I spend my time rereading my notes. I sit with the lights off looking into the airshaft, imagining Hans Reiser and his cruel disregard. On March 13, 2002, back when they were still friends, Hans sent Sean an email saying Nina would not be the only woman in his life. He said he needed at least five more children. He must have meant boys. He never mentions his daughter in any of his letters. The double standard didn't bother him. He said Nina could take care of the children. He thought he was benevolent and entitled. Following the separation in 2004, Cori acted out in school. After weekends with Hans, Cori told his teachers he didn't need to listen to them because they were women and women shouldn't have any rights in this country. Hans' own

15. The Robert Taylor Homes were eventually eclipsed by projects in Brazil and elsewhere.



mother testified that her son was selfish. It doesn't make him a murderer, though. Not until it's all taken together, all of his actions in the month following the crime. On September 28, 2006, Hans was picked up and a warrant was served on his body. He was taken to the station for a DNA swab and photographed nude. He carried \$9,000 in cash, his passport, and a three-page single-spaced typed note.

"I'm a well known scientist," he wrote. "You get to where you know someone's methodology is wrong." He addresses the school-teachers he believed were conspiring against him. "I've been telling you about Nina and nobody listens. I would like to thank the school and teachers for teaching me about how the court works . . . I may be a danger to the world view of some but I am no danger to my children."

It was unclear the point of the letter or why it would be one of the few possessions in the small fanny pack around his waist. Later he would say it was a press release. To me it resembles a suicide note. But he didn't go through with it. He was charged

142 Stephen Elliott

with murder twelve days later and has been held without bail ever since.

On February 11, 1963, at 6:00 AM, Sylvia Plath went to the children's room and left a plate of bread and butter and two glasses of milk. She wrote a note asking whoever found her to call her doctor, and left the doctor's phone number. Then she turned on the gas and put her head in the oven. The au pair, a young girl from Australia, was supposed to start that day. She arrived at nine, right on time, but nobody came to the door. The neighbor should have been awake but his bedroom was just beneath Sylvia's kitchen and the gas had seeped through the floor, knocking him out cold. The au pair went looking for a telephone to call the agency and make sure she had the right address. When the door finally opened at 11 AM, Sylvia's body was still warm.

In the months preceding her suicide Plath read the *Ariel* poems to A. Alvarez. He heard the despair but chose not to react to it. He critiqued the poems on their own terms, the way Sylvia wanted him to, recognizing the fatal brilliance. Even as she read aloud to him:

*I do not stir,
The frost makes a flower,
The dew makes a star,
The dead bell,
The dead bell,

Somebody's done for*

The last time Alvarez saw Sylvia, on Christmas Eve 1962, he wrote, "*She seemed different. Her hair, which she usually wore in a tight, school-mistressy bun, was loose. It hung straight to her waist*

*like a tent, giving her pale face and gaunt figure a curiously desolate rapt air, like a priestess emptied out by the rites of her cult. When she walked in front of me down the hall passage and up the stairs of her apartment her hair gave off a strong smell, sharp as an animal . . . When I left about eight o'clock to go to my dinner-party, I knew I had let her down in some final and unforgivable way. And I knew she knew. I never again saw her alive."*¹⁶

Plath's last collection culminated in a new era in letters, the merger of the artist with her art. It was the beginning of the sixties, the Boomers were stepping from beneath Eisenhower's prosperous shadow. Fifteen years after Plath's death, Susan Sontag wrote of Goethe and his disdain for Kleist, who submitted his work, "*on the bended knees of his heart.*" Sontag cast a harsh light across her generation's artistic expectations. "*The morbid, the hysterical, the sense of the unhealthy, the enormous indulgence in suffering out of which Kleist's plays' tales were mined—is just what we value today.*"¹⁷ That was thirty years ago. Today's artists are healthier and no special prizes are given for suffering. It's no wonder Wurtzel went to law school. The books of our time have little to do with destruction of the self. We expect our bards to survive, to figure things out. The literature of triumph over adversity spans every age, but where is the rest of it? We're living in the most medicated era humanity has ever known. The artist is no longer expected to play chicken with her creation. Doctors monitor our intake. We live in the age of Goethe on Zolof.

My left wrist is riddled like a one-way map. I was a homeless teenager the last time I pressed a straight razor deep into my arm

16. A. Alvarez, *The Savage God: A Study of Suicide* (Random House, 1972), 33.

17. Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation: And Other Essays* (Macmillan, 2001), 55.

and yanked it out, the flesh blooming from the gash like a red and white rose before I fell to my knees, unsure if I wanted to finish the job or just find a warm place to spend the night. Alvarez was convinced Sylvia did not actually want to die. For one thing, she adored her children. For another, there was the note asking whoever found her to call the doctor and providing the number. Everything was set up for her rescue, but everything went wrong and she died. It's unlikely that if Alvarez was more supportive he could have saved Plath, but we'll never know. She wanted her poetry to be understood on its own terms, even as she ate through herself. Alvarez's description of their last meeting is shockingly cruel, especially given his own history with suicide, which he wrote in a brief epilogue: *"The youth who swallowed the sleeping pills and the man who survived are so utterly different that someone or something must have died."* It's also accurate. The death smell released by the chronically depressed is powerful and repellent. The natural inclination is to recoil. To function one has to hide one's intent. Even when we write about it we keep it to ourselves.

Geoff Dyer came through his depression by following a fascination with D. H. Lawrence. *"One way or another we all have to write our studies of D. H. Lawrence. Even if they will never be published, even if we will never complete them, even if all we are left with after years and years of effort is an unfinished, unfinishable record of how we failed to live up to our own earlier ambitions, still we all have to try to make some progress with our books about D. H. Lawrence."*¹⁸ Dyer's conclusions are only a beginning. To follow an interest out of the darkness is a trick, a small Band-Aid for a larger problem. What happens, I wonder, when the study is complete, the book published? How do we remind ourselves to start again?

Norman Mailer wrote, *"The private terror of the liberal spirit is*

18. Geoff Dyer, *Out of Sheer Rage* (North Point Press, 1999), 231.

invariably suicide, not murder." Hans' letter was not a cry for help, it was an angry wail. In the final act he would force the world to see that he was right. He wasn't, but he couldn't help himself; he wanted others to believe. By September 28, 2006, Hans Reiser had given up. He was haunted and trapped. Then, for some reason, Hans decided to fight, to "not back down" as he told Nina in one of many threatening emails he sent her. In court, he frequently smiles as his enemies are exposed on the stand. He laughs at all of the prosecutor's jokes. He sees Paul Hora as a worthy adversary. The trial gives his life meaning; no matter what happens, the world will hear the wrongs perpetrated against him.

This book begins with a suicidal urge. If I was going to kill myself anyway, I could write whatever I wanted. And that's what I started to do. And then I met Sean and I became curious about things and my curiosity kept me going. But my curiosity about Sean Sturgeon and Hans Reiser will end. I've been playing emotional Russian roulette. Life requires more than a series of projects to keep us busy. I want to finish this story, which is structured around the depths of my own psychic pain. But I don't want to stick my head in the oven with no guarantees. Hans waits in his cell, thinking through his defense like a puzzle, which once solved will set him free. I'm thinking through my own.

Patty lives above Pacific Heights and from her bedroom you can barely see the lights on top of the Golden Gate Bridge. I haven't called her since her birthday four months ago. When we were dating she wouldn't let me wear clothes in her apartment or sit on the furniture, so when I arrive I take my clothes off in the entryway beneath the portrait of her deceased husband.

She used to buy me things, decorations for my bedroom, women's panties and a camisol she wanted me to wear when I slept with her. We would go to restaurants and she would order for me. I wouldn't even look at the menu. And if I wanted a beer, or something else, I would ask permission first.

Patty ties me to the bed facedown and stuffs her panties in my mouth. She beats me first with a thick paddle and then a cane. I try to clear my mind and let the pain wrap around me, separate the individual welts. I like this feeling, this helplessness. I like knowing there's nothing I can do.

There's still at least a month left in the trial. Hans has been raising his hand in court, interrupting the proceedings. The judge reprimanded him in front of the jury. I've been making extra money filing reports for *20/20*. I call several times a day to tell them who the witnesses are, if any new information is presented. A producer at *20/20* told me *48 Hours* might do a book about the trial and get Sean to sign an exclusive agreement. She was making it up, hoping I would sabotage the competition. It was all just ugly. The trial has gone three months already. How much is enough time to decide whether or not a person should spend the rest of their life in jail? During breaks I sit in the bathroom and crush a small amount of Adderall on top of the toilet-paper dispenser, snorting it quietly while the bailiffs and lawyers wash their hands.

"Do you remember when I told you never to write about me and you agreed?" Patty asks. I shake my head. I turn to look but she's moved behind me and I can't see her, just the edge of a yellow dresser and the curtain drawn across the window. I hear her rummaging through some drawers. I know she doesn't like being written about but I can't remember that specific conversation. Did I really say I would never write about her? I remember when we were first together and she cut me with a scalpel. It was the first time I had ever been cut by someone, three quick slices along my left rib whose scars I can still see clearly. I begged her to stop and later begged her to cut me again. Other times she stuck me full of needles, making heart patterns on my chest. I had no idea my capacity for pain before meeting her. Over time, when we were dating other people, we would occasionally sleep together. She would scratch messages in my side with her finger-

nails or with pins along my legs for the next woman to see. I remember Miranda running her fingertips over the dried blood at the top of my thighs, not commenting on the large red letters spelling out *MY DIRTY WHORE*.

Patty and I didn't use safe words. We didn't play "safe, sane, and consensually." She told me to call her "daddy," and threatened to shave my head. Sometimes she hit me when she was angry, when we were just walking down the street. Then she started taking pills for her anger and she became someone else.

"I don't know why I allow you to keep hurting me," Patty says, sitting next to me on the bed. I wait, moving just enough that my shoulder is against her leg. She gets up and hits me again, much harder, then again. I stretch my fingers forward as she lays into me. It doesn't feel good anymore. I'm thinking about Lissette and my father and someone who said that a writer will always sell you out. I'm saturated with self-loathing. Why is she doing this? I want her to stop but instead she goes back to the paddle, the thick wood landing heavily on my back. I don't scream or make any noise.

When Patty is done she unties me but I don't move. I lie like I'm dead, like a fish deposited on the sand. She lies on top of me. I feel like I am all out of tears, though I haven't cried at all. My insides are dry. She walks me to the door and I get dressed. She watches me with something like a concerned smile. It's well past midnight and I can hear rain pattering. I don't have anything to say. We hug and kiss. Her lips, thick and healthy, are the best thing about her.

"You're getting skinny. You need to eat." I don't respond. She presses a finger against my ribs. "Don't ever call me," she says, "or try to contact me again."

"What are your issues with women?"

I'm talking to an editor from a large publishing house. She's offering to buy this book but I don't think I can accept.

148 Stephen Elliott

"I don't know," I say. "I'd like to be in a relationship."

"That's not the impression I get."

I know what she's saying. The only answer I can imagine is that my desires override each other. My desire for a stable, loving relationship is canceled out by the urge to be hurt and humiliated. But even without these desires I would have to develop the same skills everybody else does: to trust, to commit, to enrich someone else's life. I would have to become consistent.

The editor reminds me of a nurse who treated me the time I was found sleeping in a hallway with my wrist sliced open. "Why would you do that?" she asked. I didn't bother to reply. I was fourteen. She was blond and pretty, her hair cut in a practical bob. I stared at her jaw and watched her throat move as she talked and taped my wound shut. I wanted to ask if she would take me home, to point out her hypocrisy. But I didn't so I never knew whether she might have said yes. That was my first morning as a ward of the court.

My trials went for years as the state battled my father for custody. Family First was the official policy of the Department of Children and Family Services, and caseworkers would meet with me in small rooms asking if I wouldn't rather be with my dad. I was intransigent. Before the hearings my father whispered to me outside the courtroom, "You killed your mother," something he still says in the notes he sends me. He wanted to provoke an outburst so the judge, the social workers, would see me out of control. But that didn't happen. I usually turn my rage inward. He was fighting on principle; he didn't like anybody pushing him around. There was no chance of me going home with him, I would have gone back to the streets instead. And I don't think he wanted me home. He had never reported me missing. Eventually my father stopped showing up for the hearings but before that I asked him for his new address and he said I would find out where he lived in due time. And I did.

An older friend drove me from Chicago's South Side into Evanston. We went up and down the streets looking for my dad's Town Car. His other car was a 1971 sky blue Cougar convertible with a white leather interior, a 351 Quickstart engine, and the original hubcaps featuring a large cat curling around a red, white, and blue number one.

We found the Lincoln parked on a residential street in front of a three-story house with big windows blasting light onto a porch with a broad wood swing and a full green lawn. The house was gigantic. Somewhere inside was my older sister, my stepmother, my new sister only a year old. Later my father and I would make up and I would go in their kitchen and make sandwiches, even do my laundry, but I would never spend the night in that house.

I was fifteen years old. We were two blocks off the lake. If we listened we might have heard the surf bubbling onto the sand. The beaches were semi-private; residents were given tokens for admission, everybody else had to pay a fee. I sat with my friend for moments, or minutes, pretending it was no big deal that I had just found my father's house. Unsure of my own feelings, even to this day. Unsure if I had killed my mother. It seems impossible. I wasn't even there when she died. I didn't see her that morning, I just got up and went to school. And that day, summer just over, my father waited in the convertible with the top down, parked in front of the entrance in the early afternoon as we streamed from the building. The sky was as clear and blue as it's ever been. I climbed in the passenger seat without saying anything. He was crying for himself, hoping I might help him with his pain. But I was indifferent to it and didn't love him yet. I hadn't known my mother was dying. Nobody had said anything about that. Her death was simple; no arrests were made. She just didn't wake up. Her skin was bleached from years spent out of the sun, and the blood sifted through her and settled on her side in one large, colorful bruise. Or so I was told.

150 Stephen Elliott

Eighteen months later and my father had a new wife, a new child, and a new house. The house was nicer, the wife was healthier, the neighborhood was better. Did I want to go inside? I remember it perfectly, the vibrancy of the memory the only testimony to the meaning of the discovery. I knew where my father lived again and I knew where I lived twenty miles away in a group home with eight other boys. That particular group home was a very hard place and I never wanted to go back there. It was spring. It was night. Our pockets were filled with coins from robbing parking meters. I stepped outside and ran a key along the back door of my father's dark blue car. Then we drove away.

You tell me, I think, still holding the phone with the editor from the large publishing house, feeling the pressure of the nurse's thumb on my palm as she pulls the tape and my skin comes together, making for a cleaner scar. What is my problem with women? Tell me and I'll believe you.